

Monthly Budget for the Fitzgerald Family, 1923

Monthly Expenditure 1923	
TAXES	200.00
RENT	300.00
FOOD	200.00
COAL + WOOD	35.00
ICE	8.50
GAS	27.00
LIGHT	14.50
PHONE	25.00
WATER	5.00
SERVANTS	295.00
DOCTORS	42.50
DRUG STORE	32.50
CLUB	105.50
NEWSPAPERS	5.00
BOOKS	14.50
FLOWERS	9.00
AUTO	23.00
PLUMBER	13.50
ELECTRIC	1.50
COMUTATION	4.00
SCOTT'S CLOTHES	33.00
Zelda's CLOTHES	100.00
DADY'S CLOMES	25.00
HOUSE HOLD AND MISCELLANEOUS CHARGES	81.00
TYPING	12.00
	1620.40
	785.60
	1620.40
	2396.00
	80.00
	26.50
	33.00
	10.00
	20.00
	10.00
	15.00
	4.00
	100.00
	15.00
	33.00
	25.00
	24.00
	276.00
	House Liquor
	PLAZA
	ALABAMA
	ATLANTIC CITY
	THEATRE
	BARBER
	HAIR DRESSING
	CHARITY
	WILD PARTIES
	Taxis
	Gambling
	LUNCHES (N.Y)
	SUBWAY (cdf)
	Miscellaneous cash

from F. Scott Fitzgerald's private papers
Yes, this is own handwriting (cool, no?)

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Living the Good Life?

A Peek into the Fitzgeralds' Pocketbook

For the following questions, compute the answers into today's dollars. Use this figure, factored by an online inflation calculator:

\$1.00 in 1923 = \$ 23.19 today

1. Get your calculator and figure out how much money, in today's dollars, the couple spent on:

Rent?

House liquor and wild parties?

Food?

Entertainment, not including above?

Servants?

Ice? (Why so much?)

Clothes for Zelda?

Plumber? (Why so much?)

Clothes for F. Scott?

Total monthly expenses?

Clothes for their daughter, Scotty?

Charity?

What percentage of their total expenses went to charity?

2. What word did Fitzgerald misspell? (Take comfort in knowing that even great writers mess up sometimes.)

3. In the space below, write a summary of what you learned about the Fitzgeralds' lifestyle. What sounds good? What sounds bad? What do their purchases say about their priorities? Do you think people today have similar or different priorities? Explain your answers. (So, yes, I'm looking for at least five sentences here. Feel free to continue your answer on the back of this sheet.)

KEY w/notes for discussion

Living the Good Life?

A Peek into the Fitzgeralds' Pocketbook

For the following questions, compute the answers into today's dollars. Use this figure, factored by an online inflation calculator:

$$\text{\$1.00 in 1923} = \text{\$ 23.19 today}$$

1. Get your calculator and figure out how much money, in today's dollars, the couple spent on:

Rent?	\\$6,957	What kind of place could you rent in N.Y. for this amount today? Why were the Fitzgeralds renting, anyway? Discuss.	House liquor and wild parties?	\\$4,174.20	Your students should be freaking out about this. Zelda and F. Scott were notorious alcoholics, but they were also generous hosts.
Food?	\\$5,217.75	Yes, this is excessive for 3 people, but they were also feeding their staff and entertaining pretty heavily. Be sure students added "lunches" into the food total.	Entertainment, not including above?	\\$2,565	Be sure to include everything under this category, from club dues to theater to books/newspapers/flowers. Anything that looks fun goes here.
Servants?	\\$6,841.05	Housekeepers, nannies, drivers, cooks, etc...	Ice? (Why so much?)	\\$197.12	Probably had an ice box instead of a refrigerator and, again, they were hosting lots of parties.
Clothes for Zelda?	\\$2,319	What girl wouldn't want that clothing allowance? Like today's A-listers, Zelda had social pressure to always look stylish.	Plumber? (Why so much?)	\\$313.07	And what happens when people drink too much? Ew.
Clothes for F. Scott?	\\$765.27	Almost seems reasonable by comparison, no?	Total monthly expenses?	\\$55,563.24	Whoa! Fitzgerald was a successful writer, but he wasn't THIS successful. They lived beyond their means, which was a huge stressor for him. Later in life, he tried to write Hollywood screenplays (which he hated) because he was so desperate for money.
Clothes for their daughter, Scotty?	\\$579.75	For a toddler? Oy vey!	Charity? What percentage of their total expenses went to charity?	\\$92.76	Just about 1/100th of a percent was given to charity. Obviously, their priorities were askew.

2. What word did Fitzgerald misspell? (Take comfort in knowing that even great writers mess up sometimes.)

Miscellaneous (He spelled it two different, both incorrect ways. I like that everyone, including a powerhouse writer like Fitzgerald, needs an editor.)

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Answers will vary.